



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fall 2014

Pelican Island

National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Reflections



Bi-annual newsletter reflecting on the past while looking towards the future

SPOTLIGHT

Volunteer Voices . . . Hear about why people are volunteering on the refuge!

50th Wilderness Anniversary . . . DYK Capt Hiram's and refuge staff are partnering?

Owl Prowl, Wildlife Tours & much more . . . FREE upcoming refuge education programs!



Pioneer Festival.....	3 - 5
Bird Surveys.....	6,7
Outstanding Volunteer of the Year.....	8
Alternative Spring Break.....	9
“QRazy” for the Refuge.....	10
Migration Madness.....	11,12
“Bee” Inspired.....	13,14
K-12 Art Contest.....	15
Volunteer Voices.....	16
Highly Invasive.....	17
Wilderness.....	18
Upcoming Refuge Programs.....	19

ON THE COVER: Brown pelican in
the Indian River Lagoon, FL. Photo
credit: Andrea Westmoreland

Welcome to Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

There is more to the refuge than just the historic island.

Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, situated in the most biologically diverse estuary in North America, the Indian River Lagoon, consists of over 5,400 acres and serves as the birthplace of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Although historical Pelican Island proper has been closed since its establishment in 1903, there are other areas of the refuge open to the public.

There are no fees associated with enjoying America's first national wildlife refuge. Enjoy free public use opportunities such as our boardwalk and observation tower to view Pelican Island, two salt marsh impoundment hiking trails, each three miles, including a wildlife observation deck extending 75 feet into the salt marsh, native butterfly garden, wildlife tours and much more.

Refuge Reflections is our bi-annual newsletter highlighting outreach, environmental education, interpretation as well as biological efforts pertaining to the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Refuge Reflections is distributed by refuge staff via email and Facebook only. All photos and images are courtesy of the United States Fish & Wildlife Service unless otherwise noted.



By Kevin J. Lowry, Visitor Services Manager

The sky was filled with different shades of dark gray angry clouds ready to open up at any moment to release heavy rains. However, that did not prevent over 500 visitors from attending the refuge's Pioneer Festival on January 9, 2014.

This was no ordinary day. This was a special day to remember the life and celebrate the 150th birthday of Paul Kroegel. Mr. Kroegel, a German immigrant, settled on Indian River Drive in Sebastian, FL. Kroegel grew fond of tiny five-acre Pelican Island. He voluntarily risked his life by making a personal commitment to protecting the birds that called the island home. Consequently, Kroegel was hired as a game warden and eventually became the first refuge manager of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Festival enthusiasts had a unique opportunity to take a step back in time to experience a day in the life of a Sebastian pioneer. Locals and tourists were treated to the authentic sights, sounds, aromas and flavors of the pioneer days.

Florida's first ever working waterfront on Indian River



PERFECT LOCATION – *Florida's first ever working waterfront on Indian River Drive in Sebastian served as the perfect authentic location for the refuge's Pioneer Festival. Photo: Garry Tucker*



FAST FINGERS – *Rich Votapka attracted pedestrian traffic with the fast playing sounds of his banjo. Photo: Garry Tucker*



Drive served as the perfect authentic location. Rich Votapka attracted pedestrian traffic with the fast playing sounds of his banjo. While Rick rested his fingers, President Teddy Roosevelt (Joe Wiegand) who served as the emcee, delivered loud powerful messages about Kroegel and the pioneer days.

And who could forget the aromas and flavors of this special day! People could smell the authentic food for miles. If it wasn't the local oysters and clams on the grill, it was the smoked mullet and mullet roe people salivated over. There was heart of palm salad, swamp cabbage and local honey available to sample as well.

Wood carver Tomas Simms, bee keeper Larry Bowles, quilt maker Gertrude Glaser and several boat builders demonstrated the life of a traditional pioneer throughout the day. There was a family scavenger hunt, people were casting nets into the lagoon and refuge staff were available to answer questions about the historic island and other sections of the refuge. There were two rehabilitated brown pelicans released back into the lagoon as well, a highlight of the day. Another highlight of

the day was story time with Paul Kroegel's granddaughter, Janice Kroegel Timinski, who shared stories and fond memories about her grandfather. And to top it all off, the large enthusiastic crowd sang Happy Birthday and were each treated to a piece of cake.

Refuge staff coordinated the celebration with local pioneer family members Tim Timinski and Charlie Sembler, who were the financial

underwriters of the event, as well as Billy and Suzy Tiedge, owners of Crab-E-Bill's Seafood Market & Eatery and the city of Sebastian.

City Mayor Bob McPartlan read a proclamation to the crowd announcing January 9th as "Paul Kroegel Day" in Sebastian.

For more fun photos from the Pioneer Festival, check out our Facebook page at: facebook.com/PelicanIslandNWR



HAPPY 150th BIRTHDAY— Paul Kroegel's granddaughter, Janice Kroegel Timinski , poses with Mayor McPartlan and President Teddy Roosevelt (Joe Wiegand). Photo: Garry Tucker



Pelican Island Bird Surveys



By **Andrew Eastwick**, *Biological Science Technician*

In an effort to monitor the impacts to birds from recent restoration projects, flight line counts are conducted throughout the year to determine species abundance that are using Pelican Island for roosting, loafing and nesting. Restoration of the historic rookery has been conducted in three phases (2000 thru 2006), which included protecting the island using fossilized shell / oyster

beds along the outer edges and the planting of native cordgrass and red mangroves to reduce erosion caused by waves created from nearby boating traffic. Pelican Island is located in the Indian River Lagoon and is the only island where public entry is not permitted without official authorization. Pelican Island is approximately 3.26 acres and is located 363 m west of Pelican Island NWR property

off of south Jungle Trail. The island is composed primarily of mangrove vegetation, sea grasses and recently restored oyster beds.

The flight-method can be conducted off of the island and is most suitable to avoid disturbance to the birds that are using the important rookery. To conduct a flight-line count, observers count all birds flying to and from the colony from all directions over a specified period of time.



COUNTING BIRDS – *Refuge staff and volunteers conduct surveys by kayak to minimize disturbance to birds on Pelican Island. Photo: Christine Trammell*



HOME SWEET HOME – Nesting Wood Stork. *Photo: Vince Lamb*

Flight-lines were previously determined and separated by two markers which divide the observation area into two zones, east-side and west-side. Each zone contains a flight-line that will be observed one at a time for one hour, beginning 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunrise. The observers travel to the pre-designated point on kayaks

and survey while inside the kayak or standing in the shallow lagoon water. As expected, species abundance varied throughout the year. The highest concentrations occurred during the fall and winter seasons, due to migrants and nesters, with a decline during the summer months when the chicks fledged and the migratory birds returned to the north.

The rookery supported an average of just under 2,000 wading birds and waterfowl in the peak months and around 1,000 birds in the summer months. The highest concentrations were White Pelicans, Double-Crested Cormorants, Egrets, Tri-Colored Herons and White Ibises. Additionally, a successful colony of approximately 100 pairs of federally listed Wood Storks nested on the island this year.

Volunteer of the Year



By Kevin J. Lowry, Visitor Services Manager



OUTSTANDING – Mr. Doug Sutherland, of Sebastian, is this year's recipient of the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award. Photo: Kevin J. Lowry

Please join refuge staff in congratulating Mr. Doug Sutherland, of Sebastian, on his selection as this year's recipient of the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award.

Over the year, Doug has demonstrated a high level of availability and dependability, passion for the refuge complex and its habitats,

knowledge of the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System, and the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Doug has proven to be adaptable within our refuge complex as well. Whether it is working at Pelican Island NWR, Archie NWR, or Lake

Wales Ridge NWR, Doug never passes up an opportunity to help with our needs in biology, maintenance or visitor services. "Thank you. This is a great honor for something I love to do", said Doug.

Congratulations, Doug! And once again thank you for your willingness to donate your valuable time at your national wildlife refuge.

Alternative Spring Break



By **Kelly Astro**, UCF's Burnett Honors College

Rather than spending the week off at home or on a beach, nine exceptional Burnett Honors College students have the opportunity to spend their spring break dedicating a week of service to Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. This trip is a great way to engage in community service while traveling to a new and interesting location.

The Burnett Honors College Office of Research and Civic Engagement works with the refuge to ensure that the trip has elements of service and learning. During the March 2014 trip, each morning students worked on a conservation project at the refuge alongside staff. Each afternoon, students were taught about the National Wildlife Refuge System and the various purposes that refuges can serve.

While the trip placed an emphasis on service and learning, Burnett Honors College makes sure that the students are able to have fun on their trip. Built into the week of service is a free day when students can relax and enjoy the beach.



“QRazy” for the Refuge

By **Richard Baker**, President, Pelican Island Audubon Society (PIAS)

Visitors can learn more easily about the refuge! Smartphone users now can scan QR (Quick Response) codes (similar to barcodes) on signs at the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge to get photos, videos and descriptions about different areas within the refuge. One of PIAS’s Special Places is America’s first national wildlife refuge and our namesake - the Pelican

Island National Wildlife Refuge, because those who helped procure the lands around Pelican Island, then founded the PIAS in 1946. About forty percent of 100,000 visitors to PINWR use smartphones so many will access these innovative new signs to learn about mangroves, seagrasses, etc. You can see the videos also on the PIAS website.

Audubon’s Bob Montanaro, Administrative Assistant and talented wildlife photographer, did the artwork and videos in collaboration with the refuge and Indian River County’s Public Works Department who assisted in manufacturing the signs.

Audubon and refuge staff installed the “iNature” signs. Funding for the signs came from an Audubon Florida grant.



NOW THAT’S SMART – Use your smart phone to scan QR codes along refuge nature trails for video and photos about the refuge. Photo: Vince Lamb

Migration Madness



By **Kevin J. Lowry**, Visitor Services Manager



1,2,3, MIGRATE! – Refuge staff used the outdoors as a classroom setting to teach students from Liberty Magnet Elementary School about migratory birds. Photo: Marilee Bell

Refuge staff visited Mr. Will Daulby's classroom at Liberty Magnet Elementary School in late May. Students learned about the importance of resident and migratory birds as well as their struggles during migration each year.

The lesson plan included the history of Pelican Island NWR, introduction to ornithology, bird migration including adaptations, navigation, routes / flyways, theories, and dangers of migration.

Afterwards, students ventured outside and played an interactive game about the struggles of migration that birds endure each year, which incorporated physical exercise. To conclude, each student was given a set of lumber to

construct their own bird house. This part of the lesson plan taught students about being good stewards and practicing citizen science in the local community.

"This was awesome! The students would not stop talking about birds and asking when could they visit the refuge for a field trip," said Mr. Daulby.

Students listed limiting factors which affected habitats and populations of migrating birds, predicted the effects of such limiting factors, described the effects of habitat loss and degradation on populations of migratory birds and developed conclusions about the importance of suitable habitat for migratory birds.

"I'm excited and looking forward to working more closely with Kevin Lowry and the refuge next year," added Daulby.



FOR THE BIRDS – Jayden from Liberty Magnet Elementary School constructs his own bird house to take home. Photo: Marilee Bell



“Bee” Inspired!



By **Russ Bell**, Refuge Volunteer



FACE PAINTING FUN – *Tori Mills is all smiles as Megan Thomas, refuge volunteer, paints a lady bug on her face as part of our family butterfly garden program. Photo: Kevin J. Lowry*

To celebrate National Pollinators week, refuge volunteers, Russ and Marilee Bell, offered a family oriented program designed to highlight the challenges faced by pollinators. The program highlighted the important role of pollinators in our economy since over 150 food crops in the U.S. depend on pollinators. After a discussion of types of pollinators and

threats to them, participants toured our demonstration garden and saw first-hand host and nectar plants for butterflies that could be planted at their homes. The theme BEE INSPIRED was emphasized to encourage visitors to do something in their own yards and neighborhoods to create places for pollinators to prosper. Several participants

left the Refuge for visits to nurseries with lists of host and nectar plants provided by this program.

Tips for helping pollinators –

Plant a garden using native flowering plants:

- Choose a variety of colors and shapes that will attract a variety of pollinators
- Choose plants that flower at different times providing nectar and pollen sources throughout the growing season.
- Plant in clumps rather than single plants to better attract pollinators

Provide habitat for nesting and egg-laying, such as:

- Shrubs, tall grasses, and low-growing plants
- Patches of fallen branches and brush
- Small patches of bare ground
- Bee nesting block

Avoid or limit pesticide use:

- For natural pest control provide a diverse garden habitat with a variety of plant sizes, heights, and types to encourage beneficial insects
- Expect and accept a little bit of pest activity
- Try removing pests by hand (wearing garden gloves)

“Bee” Inspired Photos





Interested in participating in the Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest?

If so, make sure you:

1. Review and print contest rules and forms.
2. Read the contest rules carefully and make sure you meet the requirements.
3. Begin researching and preparing your entry.
4. Fill in the entry form completely and affix it to the back of your entry.
5. Mail your entry to your state coordinator by March 15th.

Call Kevin Lowry at: 772-581-5557 to schedule a free classroom visit.

For more information, check out our website at: www.fws.gov/juniorduck

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

\$5

KING EIDER

SI YOUN KIM (NJ)

2014-2015 JUNIOR DUCK STAMP

Focusing on wetland habitat and waterfowl conservation while connecting youth with the outdoors.

K-12th

JUNIOR DUCK STAMP

ART CONTEST

www.fws.gov/juniorduck

Explore your National Wildlife Refuge

Cash prizes will also be awarded:

National 1st Place: \$5,000

National 2nd Place: \$3,000

National 3rd Place: \$2,000

Conservation Message 1st Place: \$500



By Refuge Volunteers

Join our volunteer family today and be part of something big! Call 772-581-5557 ext 5 or email kevin_lowry@fws.gov for more information.



Marilee Bell

"I LOVE to volunteer, but I also enjoy learning new skills. That's sometimes a challenge in finding the right place.

Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge was certainly the place I wanted to be. There are so many opportunities to learn new information and then pass it on to visitors.

Yes, it is possible to learn 50 migratory birds in a few weeks! But, it is also a place that utilizes many skills and the training is available for you to help in the way that best fits your strengths." – Marilee Bell



Jack Lampiasi

"After being a public school music educator for over thirty years I decided I wanted to do something different with my time. Helping maintain Teddy Roosevelt's and the nation's FIRST National Wildlife Refuge seems to suit me very well. Where once my library and reading was all about music and biographies, I now have expanded to Field Guides of nature's world.

I have and continue to volunteer at places other than the refuge. However, refuge staff, unlike some others, have shown themselves to be very appreciative and helpful group of people. I truly look forward to the day or two a week I spend at the Refuge."



Russ Bell

"I decided that I was bored listening to news anchors talking about the same things in 30 different ways.

It was time to bring some excitement into my life. I quickly learned that meeting the requirements of a Volunteer at a National Wildlife Refuge could be quite exciting.

Learning to identify 50 different migratory birds to help visitors understand what they are seeing, learning how to safely operate trams, ATVs, mowers and kayaks and learning how to set-up, install and use infra-red traffic counters can be very exciting. There will be plenty of time to do that boring stuff when I get old." – Russ Bell



By **Andrew Eastwick**, *Biological Science Technician*

Over the past several years, refuge staff have committed themselves to the eradication of the highly invasive, non-native, Brazilian pepper, Australian pine and cogon grass which persisted throughout 450 acres of upland habitat on spoil deposits in the Indian River Lagoon and on the Barrier Island. Much of this land contained several restored areas from previous citrus groves to maritime hammock which serves as critical habitat to many of the native species.

A strategic plan was developed in the fall of 2011,

by the Biological Science Technician, Andrew Eastwick, to effectively identify and map all Brazilian Pepper, Australian pine and cogon grass throughout the Refuge, research and develop the most effective means to treat these pest plants, and then, create and execute a tactical plan to remove the infestation from the landscape, using volunteers, Refuge staff and contractors from awarded grants. Treatments were completed using the “invasive team” conducting regularly scheduled “invasive work days” each month throughout the year, led by Eastwick,

along with a FWC funded contractor who treated 140 acres. By the end of the summer of 2014, all of these targeted exotics were in a manageable maintenance phase. These treatments have allowed many native species to rebound which is now benefiting local wildlife.

These invasive species will continue to invade the Refuge. However, with a dedicated effort to monitor and treat this major threat to vital habitat, the Refuge staff is committed to conquer these highly invasive pests. Funding to treat the entire Refuge again has already been obtained and treatments will begin in early 2015.



INVASIVE TEAM – Photo: Christine Trammell

Wilderness 50th Anniversary



By **Kevin J. Lowry**



WILDERNESS IN FLORIDA?
Most of us think of wilderness as being found only in big western states or in Alaska. However, did you know

Pelican Island, right here in our own backyard, was not only designated as wilderness in 1970, but is also the smallest wilderness in the National Wilderness Preservation System?

Join refuge staff, and Capt Hiram's, as they take us on a journey by boat to discover wilderness and America's first national wildlife refuge, Pelican Island. Staff will educate participants about the history, benefits and threats as well as common misconceptions of wilderness. Staff will also inspire partakers about the rich conservation history of Pelican Island.



Call 772-589-4345 for more information and reservations.

Attention school teachers!

Don't miss this unique FREE outdoor education experience. While back on land reflecting on their wilderness experience, your students will also have an opportunity to participate in a fun art contest beachside at Capt Hiram's.

All materials are included. School groups should call 772-581-6160 for reservations. Let's explore outside.



Historic Pelican Island proper. Photo: USFWS

Upcoming Refuge Programs



PHOTO CONTEST – Month of September

Have you visited the Paul Kroegel statue on Indian River Drive in Sebastian lately? Send us one of your creative photos posing with this historical figure to our Facebook page to be considered in the running for a FREE refuge shirt! Winner will be announced October 1st. Photo: submitted.



OWL PROWL – Saturday, October 25th 7PM.

Join us to learn about life history of owls, dissect owl pellets and then venture outside to listen and observe owls in the wild.

FREE program! Space is limited. For reservations and more information, call 772-581-5557 ext 2. Photo: USFWS



WILDLIFE TOURS –

Join us every Wednesday 8-10 AM from November to March for FREE wildlife tours of the refuge. Binoculars, spotting scopes and field guides are all provided. Space is limited. Must call for reservations. For more information, call 772-581-5557 ext 2. Photo: Vince Lamb

Follow us on Facebook
for the latest updates





STANDARD PRESORT
POSTAGE AND FEES

PAID

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
THE
INTERIOR
PERMIT G-77

Refuge Reflections

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Pelican Island N.W.R.
4055 Wildlife Way
Vero Beach, FL 32963

Put *Your* STAMP on Conservation



Did you know that Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly known as Duck Stamps, are no longer just for hunters?

Did you know that federal Duck Stamps are a vital tool for wetland conservation?
Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sales of federal Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Did you also know that Duck Stamps are for birdwatchers, stamp collectors, hunters, wildlife enthusiasts and you!

Duck Stamps are available at your local US Post Office. By purchasing a federal Duck Stamp, you will be placing your stamp on the future of conservation.

So get your ducks in a row, head over to your local US Post Office and buy a Duck Stamp today to support wetland habitat.

Future generations will thank you.

Send Us Your Comments

Letters to the Editor or suggestions about **Refuge Reflections** may be e-mailed to kevin_lowry@fws.gov or mailed to USFWS, Pelican Island NWR, 4055 Wildlife Way, Vero Beach, FL 32963.

98 cents

of every dollar goes directly to buying or leasing wetland and grassland habitat for wildlife.

**MIGRATORY
BIRD HUNTING
& CONSERVATION
STAMP**

Put *YOUR* Stamp on Conservation!

Duck Stamps are for birdwatchers, photographers, outdoor enthusiasts and YOU!

Explore Your National Wildlife Refuge